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### Comments on the Customs.

A LITTLE LECTURE TO LAURIER.—  
 The Hon. Wilfrid Laurier, in the course of his Oakville speech, said this:—

“But, sir, there is a criterion which we can always resort to in order to ascertain whether the population is as prosperous as it ought to be. Real estate, in our state of civilization, is a pretty fair criterion of the prosperity of the people. If the value of real estate is going up, that is a fair evidence of prosperity; if real estate is going down, it seems to me there must be something wrong somewhere.”

Fluctuations in the value of land may be a fair criterion from which to ascertain the increase or decrease of population, but it is never a measure of the prosperity of a community, unless it be applied inversely. Dear land means prosperity to nobody but land speculators, and it never will mean prosperity to the people until the people



get the benefit of the rental value by taxing it into the public till. It is an axiom of political economy with which we should have supposed every schoolboy acquainted, that people are wealthy in proportion as they have access to the source of wealth, which is land; it is certainly rather startling to hear the leader of the Liberal party practically assert the contrary of this, namely, that a community is prosperous in the degree in which it is forbidden such access, or, in Mr. Laurier's own words, in the degree in which “the value of real estate is going up.” Mr. Laurier went on as follows:—

“I venture to assert this much, and I assert it without fear of successful contradiction, that in the Dominion of Canada, apart from the large railway centres, real estate for the last eight years has not been advancing; in a great many places it has been retrograding. I do not know how it is in the county of Halton, but I say this for the Province from which I come, that there is not in Quebec a single farm which would sell for the price it would have sold for eight years ago.”

This passage was uttered by the orator with an inflection of sorrow, no doubt, but we see no cause for tears if the land is just as good as ever it was for supplying human wants. Mr. Laurier seems to forget that God did not make land for buying and selling purposes; He made it as a storehouse of wealth for His creatures. It was man, in his Satanic selfishness, that made it a commodity of speculation, and thus made it possible for some to live upon the labor of others. A thickly settled population, the speaker went on to argue, would always enhance the value of land, and Canada is not thickly settled because of the numbers who leave our shores to make their home in the United States. What the orator wanted to prove was that there is an exodus from Canada, and he was right, of course, in pointing to the decrease in land values as indicating—under our present unjust conditions—a decrease of population. What we want to bring to his attention is the wrongness of present conditions. Mr. Laurier wants the expatriated Canadians to come back. This may be patriotic on his part, and it is quite certain that if they did come, land values would go up. But what would that mean? Simply that rents would increase, and landowners would grow richer. What has driven people away from Canada and will continue to do so, notwithstanding our magnificent soil and climate and resources, is dear living. The dweller in Canada is taxed until he can't stand it, and he flies to the neighboring Republic, where he hopes to find the conditions of life a little easier. And of all the taxes the Canadian has to bear none are more fatal than those that go, not into the public till, but into the landlords' purses. There is plenty of good land—more than enough for fifty times our population within our borders, but to get a piece of it anywhere within the bounds of organized society, you must buy it. And the price is just about what it will take you the best years of your life to save over and above a bare living. If Mr. Laurier wants to see Canada filled up with prosperous and loyal citizens, let him turn his brilliant talents in the direction of making the land cheap. Let him join with the rising host who advocate the single tax on land values as the source of national revenue, and the abolition of all taxes, direct or indirect, now levied on the products of labor.

UNCLE SAM GOES A-WOOING.—Senator Blair's motion now before the Foreign Relations Committee has attracted very little notice on either side of the line, probably because there is a general impression prevailing that nothing more will ever be heard of it. The motion, as our readers are aware, suggests the opening of negotiations with the British Government for the political union of Canada, or certain portions thereof, to the United States. It is gratifying to note that, in the terms of the resolution, Canada is to be represented in the proposed negotiations. It is not likely that even Senator Blair anticipates that such a union could possibly be brought about at the present time; if he does it only shows how little he knows of Canadian sentiment. While we believe a decided majority of the people of this Dominion are in favor of a business union with our neighbors in the nature of Free Trade, not a prominent man could be found in the country who would take his place on the commission and vote for political union. As to the British Government, it is hardly likely that any pressure would be brought to bear on Canada from that quarter in favor of annexation, strong as may be the Imperial desire to oblige our republican kinsmen. On the other hand, it is equally unlikely that Britain would seek to withhold us if we wanted to go into the Union. We are big enough and old enough to shape our own destiny, and if Uncle Sam wants us he will have to woo us directly, and not through the good offices of our respected parent across the water. For the present his chances are poor.

AN admirer of Mr. Mercier is reported in the Montreal *Star* to the following effect:—

“It is stated that the Government at Ottawa will prevail upon the Governor-General not to sign the Jesuit Bill. In the event of this taking place Mercier and his Cabinet will hand in their resignation to the Lieut.-Governor and appeal to the Province, and be returned to power by an increased majority.

We sincerely hope the attitude of the Dominion Government is correctly stated here. Sir John will deserve